

Ashley participated in this Leadership program from the fall of 2003 to the early spring of 2005.

Thank you to the Northwest Area Foundation for sponsoring and supporting the Horizons Leadership Program. Also, thanks goes to the North Dakota State University Extension Program for partnering with NWAFF to support and provide facilitation and expertise for this program.

The City of Ashley, a member of the Dakota Connection, along with Ellendale, North Dakota and Eureka, South Dakota, has benefited greatly from the Horizons Leadership Program and continues to benefit.

The leadership capacity within our community has been expanded greatly, to include new community leaders who have stepped forward with a desire to develop and expand their leadership skills to help address the issues in our community. We have also had experienced leaders who have gotten involved with this program, desiring to refresh their skills, and understand the issues from a new perspective. Because of the efforts of these people, we are beginning to see a change in attitude, growth in the community, and a spirit of cooperation and collaboration to address the poverty issues within the community. The poverty issues include economic poverty, social poverty, poverty of leadership, and lack of human capital.

The community has been diligently working to address these issues and is seeing a change in attitude and a willingness, from both established and new community leaders, to become involved in creating the future of the community of Ashley. We are seeing new faces and new ideas at our community organizational meetings, and a sense of hope and optimism that has not been present in a long time.

We are beginning to see some tangible results from our ongoing efforts to encourage people to address the poverty issues. These results include:

- A new home that was built this last spring
- A new home that is in the process of being built
- Several new families and couples purchasing or renting homes in the community and moving here from out-of-state
- A new animal feed store which entailed the building of a large, new building
- A touchless car wash is being developed in a remodeled existing building
- A new storage unit building is being built to provide much needed storage capacity in several units
- Housing issues are being addressed, including the need to tear down some hazardous homes that are no longer occupied
- The water and sewer infrastructure has been updated with new water and sewer lines covering approximately 70 blocks within the community

- The water project also included updating the water treatment plant and putting in additional sewer lift stations
- Grant and low interest loan funds have been secured on behalf of the city of Ashley to complete the water and sewer updating project from USDA-Rural Development and the South Central Dakota Regional Council through Community Development Block Grant Funds
- The community is in the process of working with an interested out-of-state individual who wants to purchase and update the bowling alley and the movie theater to include a specialty restaurant if things work out
- The establishment of a community wellness program utilizing a grant that was given to the Ashley Medical Center from Blue Cross/Blue Shield
- The city council has been reorganized and a full-time auditor/treasurer was hired and the city records and financial information has all been updated, so now the council members have the information they need to make decisions in a much more efficient and timely manner
- The city of Ashley participated in the Dakota Heartland Champion Community project to bring nine National AmeriCorps team members to the community for one week during August - these team members provided labor to help clean up and beautify the community
- The AmeriCorps team, along with community volunteers, painted all of the fire hydrants in the community red, white and blue to help instill a sense of patriotism and support for the troops from our local National Guard units
- The community is addressing an update of their strategic plan, and will be utilizing the information collected during the NDSU Group Decision Center meeting to help identify the planning issues
- The community has contacted the NDSU Architectural School and requested the students' assistance in developing a vision for promoting the German-Russian heritage of the community - once the drawings of our main street and community are completed by the students, the community will implement a Renaissance Zone to provide tax incentives for new or existing businesses and/or home owners who choose to build something new or remodel their existing structures

These are just a few examples of the community activism that is taking place in Ashley, and much of it a direct result of the implementation of the Horizons Leadership Program. Overall, there is a renewed sense of purpose and commitment for community economic growth, and the Horizons Leadership Program helped to bring this renewed sense of optimism to the community of Ashley.

City of Ashley Accomplishments and Projects during the implementation of the Horizons Leadership Program, which has been sponsored and supported by the Northwest Area Foundation and directed by the NDSU Extension Service —

- Developed Leadership Planning Team consisting of approximately six community leaders who meet regularly to address community issues
- Implemented Leadership Plenty Training for approximately 10 community leaders
- Horizons Team sponsored a planning meeting utilizing the NDSU Group Decision Center—Approximately 175 people attended meeting
- Provided funding through Horizons Program for communities leaders to attend community development training at three different conference trainings—total of seven community leaders directly impacted, approximately eight community and civic organizations indirectly impacted to include approximately 75 people
- Provided funding to bring motivational and informational speakers into the community—approximately 100+ people impacted
- Hosted the North Dakota and South Dakota Public Service Commission members in the community to discuss cell phone coverage, resulting in "Zap the Gap" program for the state of North Dakota, and expanded cell coverage in some areas - Continuing to support meetings and distribute information regarding cell phone service to the region, and our cell phone service has improved slightly
- Partnering with city of Ellendale and the Dakota Heartland Champion Community to address housing issues on a state-wide basis, to result in changes in the North Dakota century code laws to secure housing in the rural communities
- City of Ashley partnering with Dakota Heartland Champion Community (DHCC), which consists of all of McIntosh County and the communities of Napoleon, Edgeley and Kulm, North Dakota to share expanded leadership training opportunities, skills and resources
- Ashley Horizons team members participated in a strategic planning process for the DHCC, which will indirectly impact approximately 5336 people (population of McIntosh County, Napoleon, Edgeley and Kulm according to the 2000 census) to address community economic development issues including building leadership capacity in the community, county and region. Eureka, SD has been asked to participate as a partner in the DHCC. Ellendale is already a member of the Dakota Stateline Alliance Champion Community, and actively partnering with that group on capacity building issues and projects
- Horizons Leadership Team discussing growth options and potential ideas for the community, to include developing a tourism center based on our German-Russian heritage and culture
- Secured grant funds from the North Dakota Community Foundation for \$1500 to help with developing the tourism center, which is estimated to cost approximately \$6000 to

establish - the building will be leased to the city for the price of the taxes, and the city will be responsible for rehabilitating the building and providing the necessary office equipment for this project. The tourism center will be manned by volunteers and an Experience Works laborer and will provide opportunities for expanding economic capacity through tourism

- Horizons team members are currently working to address securing new playground equipment for three in community city parks, and the city park at Lake Hoskins. The existing playground equipment has been deemed unsafe by the North Dakota Insurance Fund, and if it is not replaced or removed, the city insurance rates will be raised substantially. The team is presenting information to local civic organizations to raise funds and will be writing various grants to secure additional funding for this project
- The Ashley Ambulance needs a new building and Horizon team members and the city council are working to secure grant/loan funds to help build a new multi-purpose building which will include a community room that can be used for job training opportunities, computer classes, educational classes, senior citizen events and meetings, as well as provide a community meeting room
- The Ashley Fire Dept needs to add on some additional space for a newer fire truck that they just secured, and there are Horizons team members who are working to help them secure funding for this addition
- The city of Ashley has been actively partnering with the members of the DHCC to bring in two new manufacturing plants into the DHCC communities of Kulm and Napoleon. The local economic development group in Ashley (which includes some Horizons Team members) has provided some funds to help with this effort, as they realize the communities need to support each other's efforts to secure job opportunities, because the labor can and will come from the other rural communities as well as the community the business is moving to - this is a very positive step in the awareness of regional partnering for successful implementation of community economic development

The Horizons Leadership project has very positively impacted the community of Ashley and we are just beginning to see some results from this effort. The community leaders, both new and established leaders, have made significant strides to address the poverty issues - economic, capital, leadership and social - and we have a new, progressive view of the community of Ashley as a result. We will strive to continue moving forward now that the momentum has been established, but having the financial backing that was available through this program has helped the process tremendously. Once that is no longer available, then the progress may be significantly slower. As community leaders, we are dedicated to making a difference in the community, and with a clearer vision for the future, we will succeed in making a positive difference and impact on the community of Ashley, ND.

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